A Gift from the People of Vermont

VOL 54 NO. 2 WINTER 2024

THE 1994 CAPITAL CHRISTMAS TREE

50TH ANNIVERSARY

Story and Photos: David Zsido.
Layout: Barbe Giffin.

In Memory of Ed Fabian.

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About our author:

Dave Zsido was born in Proctor. He graduated from Mount Saint Joseph Academy and Norwich University. He worked for Central Vermont Public Service Corporation for more than 38 years. He has been a member of the Antique Truck Club of America since 1984 and served as the Chairman of the Board (Pro-Tem) of the organization from August of 2017 to December 31, 2020. He has been an avid collector of antique trucks; antique truck memorabilia; and trucking history for some forty years. He has also authored sixteen previous 'Quarterlies' for the Society.

Convoy Commander with Ed & Ron Fabian at the All American Truck Stop in Frystown, PA

This wonderful adventure began in the evening of January 26th, 1994, when Dave Zsido's telephone rang. The adventure then continued for ten months of detailed planning following that call. It resulted in a Convoy of antique Mack Trucks accompanied with one new CH Model Mack that journeyed together for more than five days in late November of 1994 from Vermont to Washington, DC. It was without a doubt the most special delivery of the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree to Washington, DC since that tradition began in 1964.

The caller was the late Ed Fabian. Ed had a definite urgency in his voice as he advised Dave that he needed to make an immediate telephone call. At that time Dave was the President of the Green Mountain Bulldawg Chapter of ATCA. Ed had just learned that the State of Vermont had been selected to provide the 1994 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree. It had been Ed's dream and desire to be involved with transporting the 'Tree' to Washington. Ed had witnessed two previous Christmas Trees, which were enroute from Vermont to Washington in 1980 and 1982, and he wanted to do the job 1994. For many years Ed had been involved with delivering a large Christmas Tree to the town office in his hometown of West Rutland, VT. Ed noted to Dave, "You have to call these two people, and you have to do it right now, and tell them we will move the Tree!" So, he gave Dave the two telephone numbers. Ed wanted to ensure that no one else would be given the moving job.

As soon as the conversation ended, Dave kept his promise and made the two calls. The first one was Pam Dwyer of Morrisville (VT), who was a member of the New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Growers Association. The second call was to Mary Jeanne Packer, a Planning Officer with the Green Mountain National Forest. The services of the Green Mountain Bulldawg Chapter to transport the 'Tree' were extended to Mary Jeanne, and graciously accepted without any hesitation. Almost immediately the planning process began for Dave. He would only have a few short weeks to put together a shell of a concept prior to the first planning meeting on March 29th. His primary areas of focus had to do with stimulating vehicle support from the

membership of the Chapter; funding for the 'Convoy'; developing a 'Convoy' route; a police escort; and developing an alliance with Mack Trucks, Incorporated.

As the March 29th meeting day rolled around, a small group of strangers gathered for the first time in the basement of the Mark Skinner Library in Manchester (VT). During the next several months, these strangers would mold themselves into a strong functional team, which moved forward with a series of realistic goals. The Team was comprised of several key player including the following:

Michael Schrotz……Manchester Ranger District U.S. Forest Service
James White……..Bennington County Forester
Mike Williams…….Bennington Chamber of Commerce
Lindsey Ketchel….Vermont Department of Agriculture
Bud Edgerton……..Christmas Tree Grower
Greg DeCell……Christmas Tree Grower
Dave Zsido……Green Mountain Bulldawg Chapter (ATCA)

While these people played key roles in the development of a strategy, this should not diminish the efforts of so many others, who stepped forward to support and participate in the Planning Committee's activities. During this first meeting, Dave proposed the 'Convoy' route, which he explained would allow for more participation by Vermonters than what had been afforded with the 1980 and 1982 Trees. Rather than striking a straight route to D.C. from Bennington, he felt that first heading north some seventy miles into the Rutland Region may provide a special advantage to more Vermonters. From there the 'Convoy' could cross into New York State and make scheduled stops along the way. One important stop would be in the Allentown (PA) Area, the Home of Mack Trucks.

However, by the time the May committee meeting was called to order, Greg DeCell expressed concerns about that the proposed 'Convoy' route would miss the Christmas Tree Growers target market area, which was in Southern New England. Dave gave Greg's concerns some quick

thought and within minutes proposed redirecting the 'Convoy' on a southeast route from Rutland through Brattleboro (VT); Springfield (MA); Hartford (CT); and then accessing I-84 westbound to Pennsylvania. Obviously, this was not the most direct route to our Nation's Capital, but it did address Greg's concerns. During the next few months, Dave laid out a more specific route with pre-determined stops along the way. The important thing was attempting to synchronize the estimated 'Convoy' speed with the planned arrival times at these stops. Dave traveled the route or sections of the route on a few occasions to assure that the 'Convoy' timeclock was doable.

Perhaps the next major obstacle to overcome was the logistical burden of snaking the 60-foot balsam fir from the stump some 1,000 feet through the woods to the nearest dirt road. Estimates to build a temporary road greatly exceeded the Committee's financial resources. Another cumbersome complication was that if a road was to be built in the Green Mountain National Forest, there would have to be a lengthy permitting process, which could extend past the planned cutting date of November 29th. It was at this point that Dave put on another 'hat' and offered to approach his employer, Central Vermont Public Service Corporation, and request possibly utilizing a special piece of tracked equipment to assist with the cutting and extraction from the woods. This equipment could maneuver into the forest without the need for a road, then safely hold the 'Tree' while it was being cut, lower the 'Tree' to be wrapped, and then snake it out of the woods. The utility company gave this concept a green light.

The next obvious concern was that of financing the 'Convoy'. Mike Williams of the Bennington Chamber launched an 'all out' crusade and approached scores of Vermont businesses seeking their donations. He had also recruited the Best Western Hotel as a resource and had obtained a commitment to free lodging for the 'Convoy' participants. Dave concentrated his efforts on Mack Trucks Inc., and the family of regional Mack Dealers. He found the support he was looking for. Mack Trucks Inc. came forward with a substantial contribution. In addition, John Mies, Manager of External Affairs, pledged the participation of one new CH Model Mack with Mechanic Supervisor, Jim Yost, behind the wheel. In addition, Mike Sheldon of Vermont Mack and the McDevitt Family of Manchester (NH) Mack also stepped forward with very significant donations.

More and more things began to take shape and solidify. Lynn Amaducci, the President of ATCA, began working with Sharon Shuman of Mack Trucks to sponsor a 'Convoy' Banquet on the trip to D.C. at Mack World Headquarters on December 3rd. John Mies and Sharon also teamed up with Pam Fritz and Tina Kisela to plan a special day for a 'Convoy' stop

at the Lehigh Valley Mall in Allentown. Jack Muller and Dave Lewis of the Northeast Pennsylvania Chapter (ATCA) offered to host a coffee break at the Pocono Peterbilt facility of Frank Buck in Bartonsville (PA). Tom Oehme of the Central Pennsylvania Chapter (ATCA) had called to offer his Chapter's proposal of a breakfast meal at the Frystown (PA) All American Truck Stop on December 4th. Moreover, the Hudson-Mohawk Chapter (ATHS) mailed in a fantastic contribution to help off-set fuel costs for the 'Convoy'. The 'Team' kept growing bigger and BIGGER! This was going to be a fantastic adventure!

When the Green Mountain Bulldawg Chapter's 2nd Mack Muster took place at Giddings Equipment in Pittsford (VT) on August 7th, November still seemed to be a good distance off. In fact, Bob Giddings hadn't even begone the restoration work on his 1959 Mack B-753, which he was going to drive in the 'Convoy'. Actually, Bob didn't get started on this project until September. Then in October, Bob and Dave made a 24 hour round trip to the Roger Gerhart All Mack Meet in Lititz (PA), where Bob acquired a pair of fenders and other needed parts to complete the restoration effort. At that point the cab was still off the frame and the 673T engine had only been recently placed back into the frame. However, there was still one valuable component missing from Bob's unit. It needed a semi-trailer. Ultimately, on November 5th, he and Dave took another trip. This time the location was a salvage yard in Westfield (MA), where Bob acquired a 1951 Trailmobile high flat trailer, which had originally been used in Mack Truck's Hagerstown (MD) plant. The trailer needed a new wheel bearing, complete sandblasting, a new wooden deck, and fresh paint.

In terms of other 'Convoy' participants, two weeks prior to the departure, Dave Whitney of Royalton (VT) still had the oil pan off the engine of his B-61 Mack and was rolling in new bearings. Joe and Charlie Eilers of Readsboro (VT) were going through the rear axle of their 1955 Mack LTL and had just completed painting their high flat trailer. Matt Pfahl of Bethlehem (CT) had discovered a problem with the radiator on his 1955 B-61 Mack. Cy Kranick of Collegeville (PA) was still undertaking

work on his semi-trailer. Moreover, Al Buswell of Woodstock (VT) was busy converting the air-tag axle on his 1959 Mack B-61 to a single axle dump truck. Then, not to be outdone, Ed Fabian's 1957 Mack B813X, the truck, which would haul the 60-foot Tree, still needed to be completely rewired. It needed a new headliner kit. It needed an air dryer and a new heater. Plus, it needed to have the windshield wipers replaced. Ed had acquired this truck in November of 1993 in Acton (MA) and was in the final stages of finishing this restoration effort. The big question that Dave was pondering was "CAN THEY GET IT ALL TOGETHER?" Dave needed a vacation!

With only about five weeks out from the 'Big Day', the needed highway permits had not been secured for the 'Convoy' participants, or as it should more precisely be stated, the needed "Permit Exemptions". Brian Keefe of Vermont U.S. Senator James Jeffords' office launched a campaign of correspondence and communications with the Governors' offices of the six States the 'Convoy' would pass through. This endeavor proved to be a real 'eye-opener' for Brian, who finally saw fulfillment of his efforts on November 30th, the day after the 'Tree' was cut, and only the day before the 'Convoy' would officially begin. Brian then carefully assembled permit exemption logbooks for each of the old Macks in the 'Convoy'. As a further touch of authenticity, Bob Giddings crafted special exemption license plates, which were affixed to each truck in the 'Convoy'. As an accompanying effort to this project, Bob also produced large "oversize load" signs and special Chapter signs for the trailers to commemorate the event.

The official 'Convoy' consisted of the following individuals with their vehicles and Christmas Tree loads:

- ***Ed & Linda Fabian 1957 Mack B813X***
  U.S. Capitol Tree
- ***Ron & Marie Fabian 1987 Mack Superliner w/1965 Mack B61***

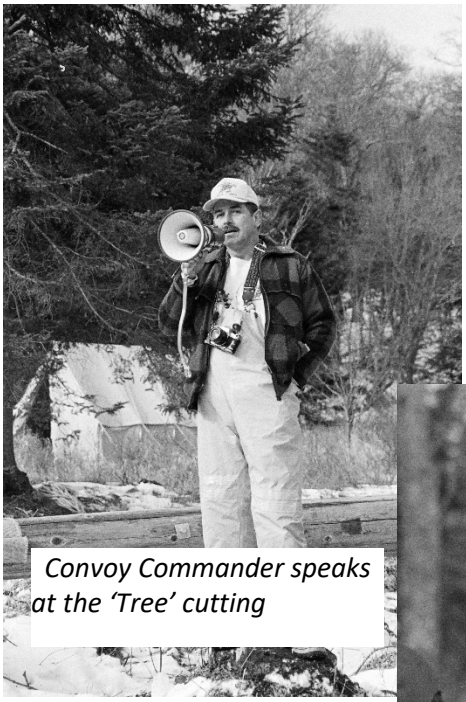
- ***Joe Eilers 1955 Mack LTL***
  35' 'parts' tree
- ***Cy & Nancy Kranick 1963 B67 Mack***
  15' U.S. House Restaurant Tree, and two 15' Senate Restaurant Trees
  20' Library of Congress Tree
- ***Dave Whitney & Jim 1959 B61 Mack***
  25' Botanical Blakeman Garden Tree
- ***Lyle & Bob Balla 1985 R600/BM Mack***
  20' Supreme Court Tree
- ***Bob & MaryEllen Giddings 1959 B753 Mack***
  15' House Tree and ten 8'-12' Trees
- ***Al & Rose Buswell 1959 Mack B61S***
  8' Senator Leahy Tree and 8' Senator Jeffords Tree
- ***Charlie Eilers/Mike Moser 1937 Mack JR***
  8' Congressman Sanders Tree
- ***Jeff Manty 1961 Mack***
  Misc. tree limbs and 8' trees
- ***Steve Manty & John Cerreta 1958 B61 Mack***
  Misc. 8' trees
- ***Ron Marquardt 1951 Mack LJT***
  Bob-tailed
- ***Matt Pfahl & John Chalmers 1955 B61T Mack***
  Support trailer
- ***Bob Daumer with Cheryl 1962 Mack C600***
  Large sign advertising the 1995 ATCA National Meet
- ***Bill & Sally Josler 1969 R600***
  Mack Support wrecker
- ***Jim Yost 1994 CH600 Mack***
  Mack Truck's 'Lucky Dog'
- ***Dave Zsido 'Bulldog' Wagon***
  'Convoy Commander'

Supporting the 'Convoy' was an array of other vehicles including a 1949c Dodge Police Cruiser piloted by Dave Lavallee and Henry Parrot of the South Burlington (VT) Police Department. Hemmings Motor News provided its 1949 GMC panel truck driven by Dolly Meade with Wally Meade operating a support vehicle for it. Moreover, there were also U.S. Forest Service vehicles and an assortment of other vehicles, which were promoting Vermont products, such as, Christmas Trees (of course!), cheese, wine, and maple syrup. Perhaps a couple of the more valuable 'Convoy' participants were the two officers from the Addison County Sheriff's Department, who provided excellent traffic control and security during the entire 'Convoy'. While Sgt. Don Keeler typically operated his cruiser at the lead position, Sheriff Jim Coons kept things buttoned together from his rear position. Without their outstanding efforts, the success enjoyed by the 'Convoy' would have been greatly diminished.

As dawn broke on November 28th, the day before the cutting ceremonies, so did some extreme wintery weather. Severe roadway icing conditions and snow made it doubtful that Central Vermont Public Service could deliver its specialized tracked equipment. However, a dedicated and skillful crew under the direction of Rick Anderson – Director of Transportation and consisting of mechanics John Foley and Steve Drzewiczewski, along with equipment operator Bill Littler, and lineworker Rex Corey saved the day and preserved the schedule. The Eilers Brothers of nearby Readsboro dispatched a medium duty plow truck, which cleared the snow from the huge laydown area. While this team battled the wintery elements on the mountain range in Somerset (VT), Cy and Nancy Kranick along with Jim Yost were encountering some nasty weather enroute from Pennsylvania to Bennington (VT).

However, with the arrival of Tuesday, the 29th of November, so did an eight-day window of fantastic weather, which was truly a great blessing on the 'Christmas Tree Convoy' and the thousands, who would be part of the festivities. As Ed Fabian was traveling through Bennington preparing to start the climb up Woodford Mountain, he had to stop

briefly to make a hasty repair to a damaged air hose on his B813X Mack. With the repair made, the initial segment of the 'Convoy' then started the climb up Route 9 to the cutting site. However, Dave had some concerns about bringing Mack Truck's new CH600 Mack back along some six miles of dirt roads, which had been ice covered the day before. Nonetheless, Jim Yost reassured Dave saying, "Not to worry", and of course he was right.



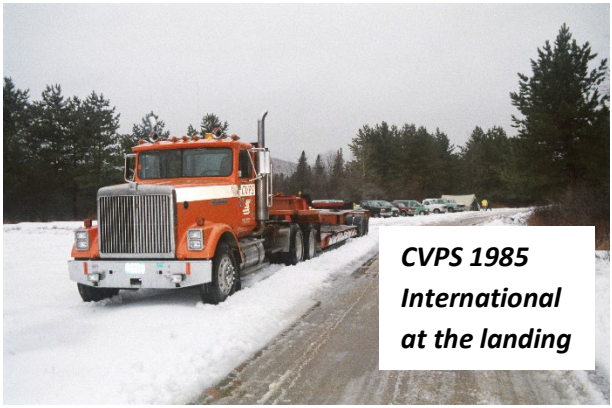
Convoy Commander speaks at the 'Tree' cutting

U.S. Senator James Jeffords at the 'Tree' cutting

11/29/1994 CVPS's tracked crane holds the Tree

Preparing to wrap the Tree

Tree wrapping is complete



CVPS 1985 International at the landing

As the initial segment of the 'Convoy' pulled onto the cutting site in the Somerset Forest, throngs of school children, along with U.S. Forest Service Personnel, and media representatives had already assembled and greeted them. Then the day-long festivities began under a brilliant blue sky. Special ceremonies, including speeches by several dignitaries, were conducted. One of the featured speakers was Jim Cooke, a President Coolidge impersonator. He offered his comments in the spirit of 'Silent Cal'. Eventually, as the morning was disappearing, the 'Tree' cutting took place. With skill and precision, the CVPS crew attached the

winch cable from the boom on its large, tracked vehicle to the 60 foot 'Tree' prior to it being cut. Just about this time the chainsaw started, so did the wind, which offered a little challenge to lowering the 'Tree' to a horizontal position on the ground. As this was taking place, back at the landing the Poulan Chainsaw Pro, Ron Hartill, was demonstrating his carving skills with a chainsaw. He artistically shaped a five-foot log section into a beautiful standing Eagle, which has since been placed at the front entrance to the Vermont Veterans Home in Bennington.

Michael Schrotz; Ron Hartill; Mary-Jean Packer; and Michael Williams at the 'Eagle' carving

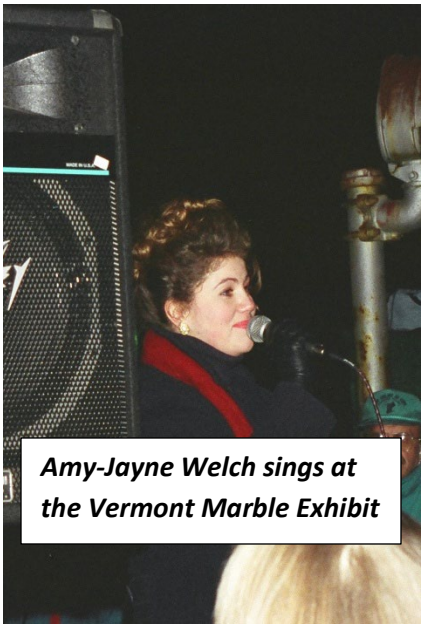
As the preliminary wrapping of the 'Tree' was underway, the bright blue sky was beginning to turn dark with the evening hours approaching. It became obvious that an unplanned night extraction from the Somerset Forest would be necessary. Carefully with safety a prime concern, the CVPS crew slowly snaked the 'Tree' from the cutting site some 1000 feet through the woodland to the access road. Then it was another half mile or so to the loading site at the Somerset Landing. There it was securely placed onto the stretch trailer that was hooked to Ed Fabian's B813X Mack. The trailer had been provided by the J.P. Carrara Concrete

Company of North Clarendon (VT). Darkness did create some complications with the loading, but 'slow and steady' got the job done. Shortly after 7 PM, with the 'Tree' safely secured, the preliminary 'Convoy' was ready to retrace its steps some six miles out of the Somerset Forest to Route 9. Then it motored westerly down the mountain some twenty miles to Bennington for the night. To the surprise of many participants in that preliminary 'Convoy', people were waiting in the darkness along the Route 9 roadway in that scarcely populated area to catch a view of the 'Christmas Tree Convoy'. More people had gathered along the streets of Bennington as well.

Loading trees on Bob Giddings B753 Mack at Giddings

Smokey Bear in the Eilers Brothers' 1937 Mack JR

Following what seemed to be a relatively short night, Wednesday, November 30th, was somewhat of a day of rest for most of the 'Convoy' group. However, Ed and his B813X Mack had an appointment with some folks from Vermont D.O.T., who wanted to do a safety inspection of his rig and the load. This appointment was delayed somewhat, while Forest Service personnel and others struggled for hours as they worked to get the load back into legal width requirements. During the brief night, the 'Tree' had settled somewhat. The compression of the branches had resulted in the load becoming more than five feet over the legal load width. Ultimately, the work crew got the 'Tree' restored to legal requirements, and Ed was able to motor out of the State Highway Department Garage to his rendezvous point with D.O.T. on Main Street in Bennington. No PROBLEMS!



Amy-Jayne Welch sings at the Vermont Marble Exhibit

Officially, Thursday, December 1st, the 'Convoy' started its incredible journey from Bennington (VT) to Washington, DC. This five-day trek, which cut through the heart of northeast America, was greeted with fantastic – above normal seasonal temperatures and great weather. One very special feature was the participation of singer/song writer Amy-Jayne Welch, a Rutland native, who had just released her latest song, 'Christmas Spirit', which she sang at numerous stops. Her song became the theme song of the 'Convoy'.

Unquestionably, the stories and memories of this special 'Convoy' are perhaps too numerous to comprehend, but unquestionably they will be talked about for years to come.

The 'Convoy' motors through Downtown Rutland to Proctor

To perhaps give a flavor of the major events of the 'Convoy', the following synopsis will provide a meaningful glimpse:

Thursday, *December 1st – 75 miles traveled*

Bennington, VT – Sendoff ceremonies –
VT Governor Howard Dean & Bennington Elementary Students
Arlington, VT – Main Street
Arlington Elementary Students
Manchester, VT- Stop at Manchester Elementary School
Elementary School students
Wallingford, VT – Main Street
Wallingford Elementary students
Rutland, VT – stop at Rutland City Hall
Special Downtown Event- loading VT Christmas Tree Growers trees, which had been delivered to Giddings Equipment Co.
Proctor, VT – Evening Reception at the Vermont Marble Exhibit
Train ride excursion from Rutland to Proctor and back.

Friday, *December 2nd – 300 miles traveled – the longest leg*

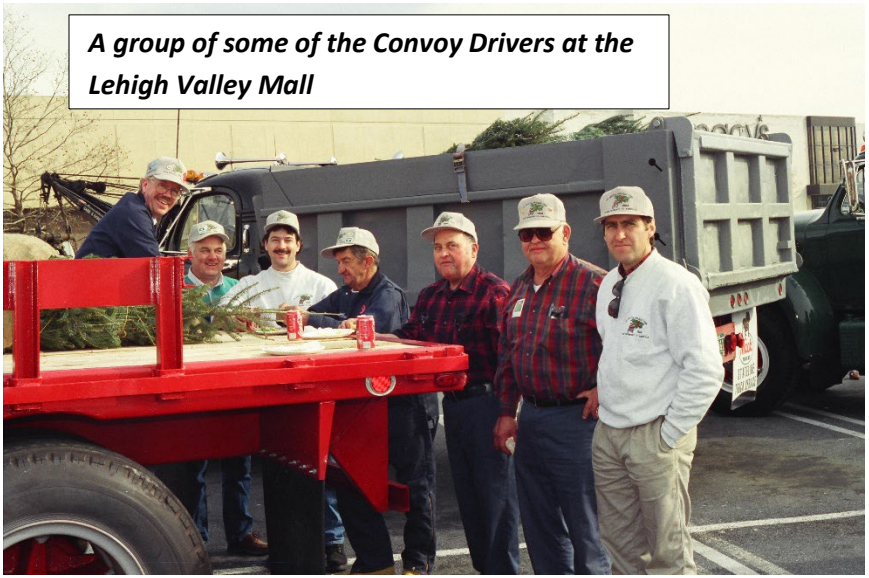
Chester, VT – Main Street
Chester Elementary Students
Brattleboro, VT – Shopping Center
Farewell to Vermont
Elementary Students
Springfield, MA – Downtown Springfield Event
Display of Vermont Products
Milford & Matamoras, PA. – Large downtown celebration
Birthplace of the First Chief of the U.S. Forest Service

The Convoy stop in Downtown Springfield. MA

Saturday *– December 3rd – 95 miles traveled*

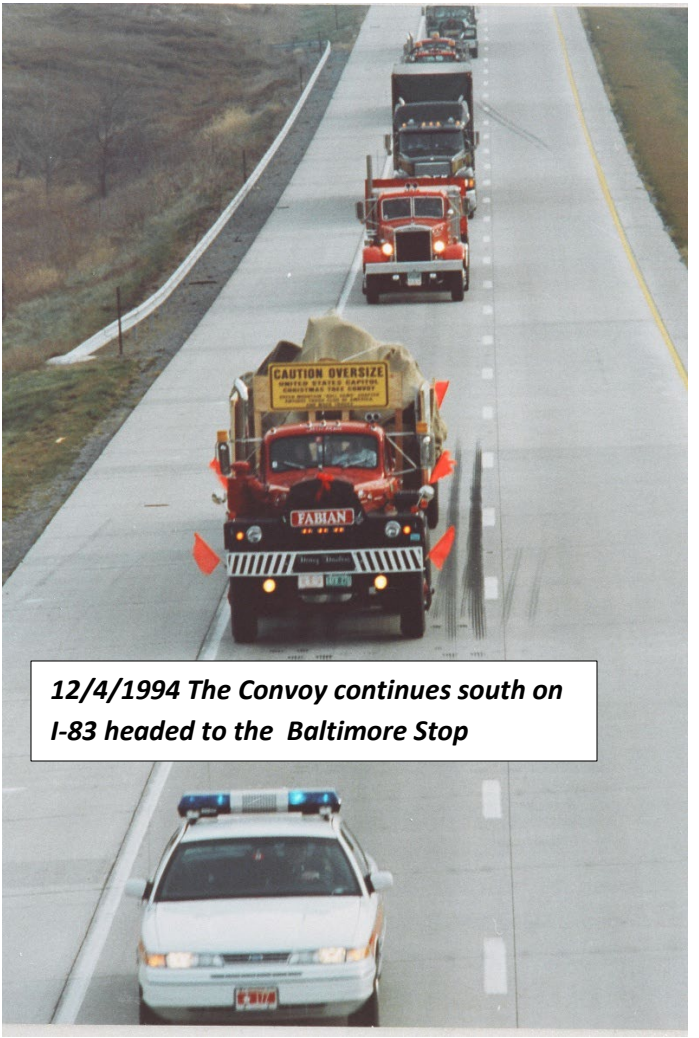
Bartonsville, PA – Coffee Break at Pocono Peterbilt
Whitehall, PA - Huge celebration at the Lehigh Valley Mall
Allentown, PA – Dinner banquet at Mack Trucks World Headquarters

Bob Giddings' B75 Mack at the Lehigh Valley Mall



A group of some of the Convoy Drivers at the Lehigh Valley Mall

Huge Mack Trucks Bulldog at the Lehigh Valley Mall.



12/4/1994 The Convoy continues south on I-83 headed to the Baltimore Stop

Sunday *– December 4th – 200 miles traveled*

Frystown, PA.- Breakfast at the All American Truck Stop was courtesy of the Central PA Chapter (ATCA). Cal Little arranged media coverage with Channel 27.

Special Note: the owner fueled all the 'Convoy' trucks without charging for the fuel!

Baltimore, MD Area – Festivities at Parkway Crossing Shopping Center

College Park, MD – the Final Staging Area before entry into DC

Unloading the smaller Christmas Trees is underway.

The mission is nearly complete

Monday *– December 5th – 12 miles traveled*

Washington, D.C. – Delivery of the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree.

The huge collection of antique Mack Trucks parked in front of the U.S. Capitol.

12/5/1994 Unloading the Tree at the Capitol

The Fabian Family gathers in front of the U.S.Capitol.

Almost ready to place the 'Tree' into its holder

'Convoy Team' poses with the 'Tree'

Unquestionably, one of the most exhilarating legs of this fantastic 'Convoy' was the final twelve miles or so from College Park into the City of Washington, DC. Shortly after a 9 AM briefing, police from the Maryland State Police, the Washington, DC Police, and the Capitol Police came together to provide the 'Convoy' with a service, which was in the category of a 'Presidential Escort'. It extended from College Park, onto the 'Washington Beltway', then along Route 50 west, and continued to the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol. In fact, the 'Beltway' (I95-S) was shut down to allow the 'Convoy' easy access to its destination. Police cruisers and motorcycles raced alongside, ahead of, and throughout the 'Convoy' to block off intersections, thus assuring that the 'Convoy' stayed intact.

As the 'Convoy' rounded the corner and pulled onto 1st Street in front of the U.S. Capitol, teams of media camera crews and reporters were greeted with the echoing blasts of air horns on every truck. Certainly, this display must have caught them by surprise, as it appeared that their initial reaction may have been one of shock. Nothing like this had perhaps ever happened in front of the Capitol before. However, they quickly adjusted, as perhaps the largest group of antique trucks ever to assemble in front of the U.S. Capitol pulled forward, parked, and then waited to have their cargo of the 1994 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree and nearly some fifty other trees unloaded. MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!

Jim Yost from Mack Trucks places a Mack Bulldog pin on U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy

MERRY CHRISTMAS AMERICA With Love from Vermont !

12/14/1994 Amy-Jayne Welch(center) with Jen Zsido(L) and Amy McGinnis(R) at the Dept. of Aariculture Ceremonv

As the Christmas Trees were being unloaded, the somber reality began to set in that this great adventure was nearly over. One by one as the trucks were unloaded, they were repositioned along 1st Street. Then the group of 'Convoy' participants were welcomed into the Russell-Senate Office Building for a reception. At 2:30 PM the Mack diesel engines fired up once again. Then there was a familiar blast from their air horns as the police once again provided a fantastic 'Presidential Escort', guiding the string of old Mack trucks out of the City, onto I-95 North, and pointed back to Vermont. The 'Convoy' would push on for approximately 300 miles and once again spend a night in Matamoras (PA). Ultimately, they would all arrive home on December 6th, 1994.

About one week later, Jim Blakeman, who co-piloted Dave Whitney's B-61 Mack on the 'Convoy', boarded a representative group of some 42 'Convoy' participants onto his G.M. Coach for a return trip to Washington for the Official Lighting Ceremony on December 14th. Jim, who owned Royal (Bus) Line in Royalton (VT), donated the bus for the trip. True fulfillment of the 'Convoy' effort was realized when at about 5:30 PM on the 14th, then House Speaker Tom Foley flipped the switch and lit the magnificent 'Tree'. Ed Fabian's 'dream' had come to reality and his desire to bring a U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree to Washington had been achieved in a far greater manner than what he ever could have imagined. Moreover, as Michael Schrotz, the spokesperson from the U.S. Forest Service – Manchester District, proudly announced as he addressed the crowds at each 'Convoy' stop along the route, "This was all accomplished without the need of a single taxpayer dollar!"

12/14/1994 The U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree Lighting

Merry Christmas!

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NEWS FROM NICKWACKETT
A Bi-Annual Newsletter Produced
by the Publications Committee of
THE RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

November 2024

Greetings Everyone!

Just a note to let you all know what we have been up to at the Nickwackett Firehouse this year. We have had quite a year of it...

Since the pandemic began, Michael Dwyer has kept our public access PEG-TV segment of Historically Speaking alive. Michael is a fascinating presenter on many current topics. His episodes are available in our video library on our website under the "videos" tab. Historically Speaking is now loaded to episode # 208 with the latest documenting Saving Evergreen Cemetery and its revitalization.

With the pandemic in the rearview, the results had quite an impact on the archives of the society. We are still receiving the donations from families across the country returning treasurers to help us tell Rutland's story. We are continually in the process of scanning, cataloging, and storing all of those cherished items.

As a reminder, in January of 2022 we received word that the Rutland Baptist Church was closing and that an auction of goods and their history was to be sold. Through an open public appeal and responding generous monetary donations, we were able to acquire a portrait of Reverend Hadley

Proctor, the first minister of Rutland Baptist Church. The painting is thought to have been painted about 1827 by Ashel Powers here in Rutland. Restoration of this painting has been ongoing for the past 2-1/2 years. Happily, the work has been completed and the painting was returned back to us in late September! We are thrilled to have the Reverend back and we are hoping to have a public formal homecoming party soon. I hope you can attend.

In January of 2023 we acquired the whole archives of the Rutland Herald and all of the Aldo Merusi negatives. Cliff Giffin, our volunteer negative scanner, at last count last week, has scanned over 26,000 negatives of never-seen photos… with only approximately another million or so to go!!

This year the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1 made a substantial donation for the purchase of a mold-spore-remediation, high-HEPA filter vacuum and a book scanner for all of the yearbooks that we scan hands-on. We wholeheartedly thank the VVA, Chapter 1, very much for their generosity! The new book scanner is hard at work. Yearbooks for the 2023 and 2024 are in the process of being scanned and will be uploaded when they are completed.

For our Annual Meeting this year, author Howard Coffin presented the *Wonderful Sharpshooters of Vermont* to a very packed firehouse. A link for this presentation is on our

website so that you can enjoyed it if you were not able to join us in person.
https://videoplayer.telvue.com/player/MFXsvSYzjQOlecorW3Sq8GyBkhIm0OQN/media/902147?autostart=false&showtabssearch=true&key=MFXsvSYzjQOlecorW3Sq8GyBkhIm0OQN&fullscreen=false

The Society continues to serve as many inquiries as possible, and we endeavor to keep up with the sometimes-overwhelming demand on social media platforms. We are available for inquiries via email, Facebook, and regular mail. Corey Kennedy attends to the Facebook page. We realize that technology is not a panacea. We are open regularly on Saturday afternoons from 1 to 4 p.m. We also set up appointments for in-person research. Most of our guests are seeking their ancestral roots in Rutland. We have had visitors from all over the country and from Manitoba, Canada. If you need to set up an appointment, please let us know, either by email president@rutlandhistory.com or call. We will do our very best to accommodate your needs.

We are a FamilySearch Affiliated Library and can access many records available only in the Genealogical Library in Salt Lake City, UT. Going forward, we will be holding a genealogical workshop to help beginners get started exploring their family's journey in America. I have contacted the registrars of the Vermont Mayflower Society, the Sons of

the American Revolution, the Sons of the Civil War, and the Ann Story DAR to bring their expertise to the event.

Just as a side note: America 250! celebrations and commemorations for the 250th birthday of America is an exciting time in Rutland! The U.S. semiquincentennial will officially be in 2027 which will also be Rutland's 266th birthday! She was chartered on Sept 7, 1761. Events in the Rutland region will be in full swing in 2025 for the 250th anniversary of the Battle of Hubbardton, the Patriot capture of Fort Ticonderoga, and the Battle of Bennington. The main page on our website will be a bulletin board of upcoming events as we know of them.

We invite you to stop in for a visit, join us as a member, or volunteer. Gift memberships are also available for this holiday season.

Hope to see you some Saturday afternoon!

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

Barbara L. Giffin, President
Rutland Historical Society - Time Lords of Rutland